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UNCLAS ALMATY 002368

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN (J. MUDGE)
ALSO FOR INR/REA (S. FEINBERG), INR/EC (J. KILIAN-KIVLER)
ALSO FOR DRL/PHD (P. DAVIS, C. KUCHTA-HELBLING)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM KDEM KZ POLITICAL

SUBJECT: SENATE ELECTIONS SET FOR AUGUST 19

¶11. Summary: Sixteen seats will be contested in the August 19th Senate elections. A one-month nomination period commenced on June 18. As candidates will be chosen indirectly by the Maslikhats (oblast-level, elected legislatures controlled by pro-Nazarbayev parties) the elections, predictably, will deliver a solid pro-presidential majority. End Summary.

¶12. On June 16, 2005 the President issued a decree announcing Senate (upper house of Parliament) elections for August 19, 2005. Of the thirty-nine seats in the Senate, seven are selected by the President. The remainder are chosen by Maslikhats in each of the 14 oblasts and the cities of Astana and Almaty on a three-year rotating basis. Consequently, sixteen seats are being contested in this election. Each Maslikhat elects two Senators by majority vote. Only the general results of the vote are announced, not the break-down.

Nominating Candidates

¶13. The nomination period for Senate candidates began on June 18, and will run until July 18. Article 71 of the Elections Law mandates that the candidates can be nominated by the Maslikhats, or they can be self-nominated. A candidate must first file an application with the Regional Elections Commission (REC). The Commission then reviews the candidate's eligibility. Eligible candidates need the support of at least 10% of all members of the given Maslikhat. To register, all candidates must deposit around \$55 with the Central Election Commission(CEE). Only candidates who gain at least 7% of the vote get their deposit refunded.

Counting the Vote

¶14. The registration of candidates ends on July 29. Election campaigning will be permitted from July 30 through August 17. The REC will tally the vote on the day of the election. For its part, the CEE plans to verify final results by August 25 and publish them no later than August 28.

¶15. Comment: Senate elections have, to date, elicited little public comment or interest. We expect the Maslikhats, already a bastion of pro-presidential parties, to deliver a solid pro-Nazarbayev Senate. One Senator from the banned DVK Party has indicated privately that she may not run for reelection. Should that happen, and if no opposition candidates are selected during this round, the Kazakhstani Parliament would be bereft of a single opposition voice. The elections, however, will show how support breaks down among pro-presidential parties. We expect Asar and the Agrarian and Civil parties to make the best of it in their respective strongholds. That said, Otan should pick up most of the seats. End comment.

¶16. Dushanbe minimize considered.

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